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Energy

BP: Global carbon emissions flat for third year in a row



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Annual statistical review highlights continued rapid expansion of renewables as coal use falls sharply

Efficiency improvements all combined to nudge down emissions levels.

That is the conclusion of the latest annual *Statistical Review of World Energy* from oil giant BP, which was released yesterday.

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"The combination of weak energy demand growth and the shifting fuel mix meant that global carbon emissions are estimated to have grown by only 0.1 per cent - making 2016 the third consecutive year of flat or falling emissions," the company said. "This marks the lowest three-year average for emissions growth since 1981-83."

The influential annual review found that renewables retained their position as the fastest growing energy source, rising 12 per cent last year, not including hydroelectric projects.

The company said while renewables still only met four per cent of total primary energy demand globally, the growth in renewables represented almost a third of the total growth in energy demand

in 2016.

More than half of the growth in renewable power came from wind, which rose 16 per cent, while solar energy grew by 30 per cent as costs continued to fall sharply.

The report also noted that 2016 saw China seize the US crown as the world's largest single producer of renewable power, overtaking the US, while Asia Pacific overtook Europe and Eurasia to become the largest producing region for renewable power.

In contrast, the challenges faced by the global coal industry continued, with coal use falling 1.7 per cent on the back of weak demand from the US and China - a trend experts are increasingly sceptical can be reversed.

World coal production fell by a record 6.2 per cent, while in the UK coal consumption more than halved. "UK coal consumption has now fallen to levels last seen at the start of the Industrial Revolution around 200 years ago," BP said.

However, BP chief executive Bob Dudley warned significant new efforts were required to ensure greenhouse gas emissions start to fall. "While welcome, it is not yet clear how much of this break from the past is structural and will persist," he said in a statement. "We need to keep up our focus and efforts on reducing carbon emissions. BP supports the aims set out in the COP21 Paris meetings and is committed to playing our part to help achieve them."

The report also highlighted how the energy market appears to be shifting towards slower growth in overall demand, as efficiency measures become more popular. BP said global energy demand was weak for the third consecutive year last year, growing just one per cent - around half the average growth rate for the past decade.

Almost all the growth in energy demand came from emerging economies, with China and India accounting for half of global growth. Both countries have vowed to significantly increase investment in renewables, electric vehicles, and energy efficiency measures, potentially leading to further downward pressure on energy demand in the coming years.

Indian energy demand grew 5.4 per cent last year, in line with recent growth rates, but China's energy use rose by just 1.3 per cent, representing around a quarter of its 10-year average growth. Average growth during 2015 and 2016 was the lowest over a two-year period since 1997-98, BP said.

"Global energy markets are in transition," Dudley said. "The longer-term trends we can see in this data are changing the patterns of demand and the mix of supply as the world works to meet the challenge of supplying the energy it needs while also reducing carbon emissions. At the same time markets are responding to shorter-run run factors, most notably the oversupply that has weighed on oil prices for the past three years."

Dr Jonathan Marshall, energy analyst at the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit think tank, said the report highlighted the scale and the pace of the transformation underway in the global energy market.

"Striking in this year's data is the scale of the shift away from coal, especially in China and the USA," he said. "The US saw an astonishing nine per cent fall in demand, while Chinese hunger for energy is being tempered by moves to a more sustainable growth pathway and the rapid expansion of renewables, which spells even further trouble for coal in the years to come."

"On a global scale, the surge in renewable generation puts it within touching distance of overtaking nuclear power as a major contributor to world energy use."



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